

**TOP SECRET**

# **SOG'S SECRET WAR**

**"SOME OF THE  
HAIRIEST  
MISSIONS EVER  
CONCEIVED"**



SOG Team member practices rappelling from a UH-1F helicopter at Command and Control South (Ban Me Thout). SOG Teams used this technique in areas where LZs could not be located, where the LZs were under fire and where employment of bombs to create a LZ would have attracted undue attention.

**by Jim Graves**

**T**OP Secret: Burn after reading or ingest.

Much of what you are about to read is covered by the National Security Act. Documents which give details on operations and projects described herein can be traced by looking up the index numbers listed in the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) history in the Pentagon.

However, the MACV history is a classified document.

Although most Vietnam veterans, war correspondents and students of the conflict are familiar with the acronym SOG — via rumor-control central, fleeting contact in 'Nam or short references that have appeared over the years in newspapers, magazines, books and movies — allusions to the group's activities have

The acronym SOG stood for Studies and Observation Group; the acronym itself was condensed from the full-blown MACVSOG: Military Assistance Command Vietnam Studies and Observation Group. Unofficially it was also known as the Special Operations Group.

SOG was organized in February 1964 by Gen. Paul D. Harkins, Commander MACV. Its basic mission was to conduct covert operations in the denied areas of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Activities within the sphere of SOG's mission included: guerrilla warfare, subversion, sabotage, escape and evasion, direct-action missions, black and gray psychological operations and some operations best described just as unconventional warfare.

For a number of obvious and valid reasons, SOG from the beginning depended heavily on the U.S. Army for its personnel. But since it also drew troops from the Marine Corps (Force Recon), U.S. Navy (SEALs) and Air Force (air crews), and drew headquarters staff from all four services, it was by definition a Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force. Since the Vietnamese were also involved, it could be called a Combined Unconventional Warfare Task Force. In addition, SOG used American civilians from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and United States Information Agency (USIA), as well as civilians from other countries.

Depending on whose estimate one accepts, SOG during its heyday had 2,000 to 2,500 Americans, 7,000 to 8,000 Vietnamese (North and South), Nungs, Cambodians, Laotians, Chinese and others involved in its myriad



ABOVE: SOG Recon Team Nungs practice on firing range in camp. Nung in foreground is firing an M79 40mm grenade launcher while one in background is firing AKM 7.62mm rifle. On ground in rear is M-60 7.62mm machine gun.

operations or projects.

As one former SOG trooper put it: "An octopus would wish that it had so many tentacles."

And if it did, it would wrap every one of them around its head and go off screaming if assigned the task of unscrambling the mixture of alphabet soup and operation/project names that provided cover for SOG operations in Southeast Asia.

With a rapidity that would bewilder the most diligent researcher, SOG Operations (the common denominator) acquired and abandoned code names and acronyms for purposes of cover. It worked so well that some people didn't know they were in SOG until later.

To get a real grasp on SOG, it is necessary to start at the beginning and with the Vietnamese.

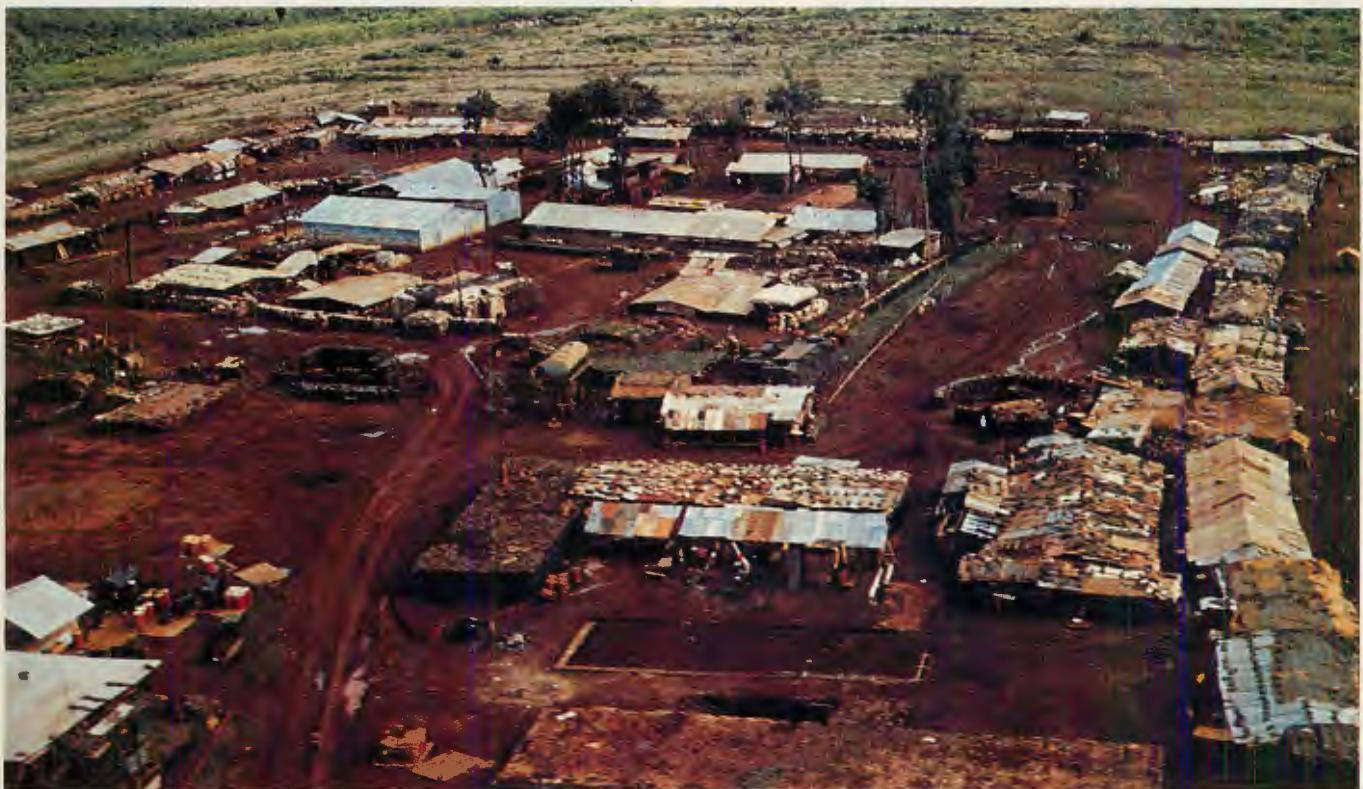
Since 1958, South Vietnam's government had carried on unconventional-warfare operations against the communists. Since they were on the receiving end of North Vietnam's operations, South Vietnam saw no reason not to reciprocate. It is assumed that the CIA was in on the act from the very beginning.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy authorized the Combined Studies Group — the operating arm of the CIA in Southeast Asia — to assist the South Vietnamese in conducting covert operations in both North Vietnam and Laos. These activities included infiltration of agents into North Vietnam to act as spies and saboteurs, and cross-border operations against Viet Cong and North Vietnamese base camps and supply lines in Laos. The South Vietnamese threw in Cambodia for good measure.

Those operations and a CIA/U.S. Army Special Forces operation, begun the year before, would have an effect on SOG.

In 1960, Kennedy authorized the CIA to conduct an operation named WHITE STAR in Laos. The purpose was to improve the military capability of the Laotian non-communist forces. When the CIA failed to make a dent in Laotian communist activity, the job was turned over to U.S. Army Col. Arthur D. "Bull" Simons, leader of the Son Tay raid in 1970 and the mercenary operation in Iran in 1978 financed by Texan H. Ross Perot (see "Who Dares Wins," SOF, June '79).

In 1960, Simons took 107 Special Forces men into the jungles of Laos. Benjamin F. Schemmer points out in his excellent book on the Son Tay raid, *The Raid*, that when Simons ar-



Studies and Observation Group launch site at Du Co.

BELOW: Master Sgt. Ed Clough (left) with a Nung team member somewhere in South Vietnam. The Nung is carrying an M3 45-caliber grease gun equipped with flash suppressor. Clough, a bit bigger than his native team members, survived the war.



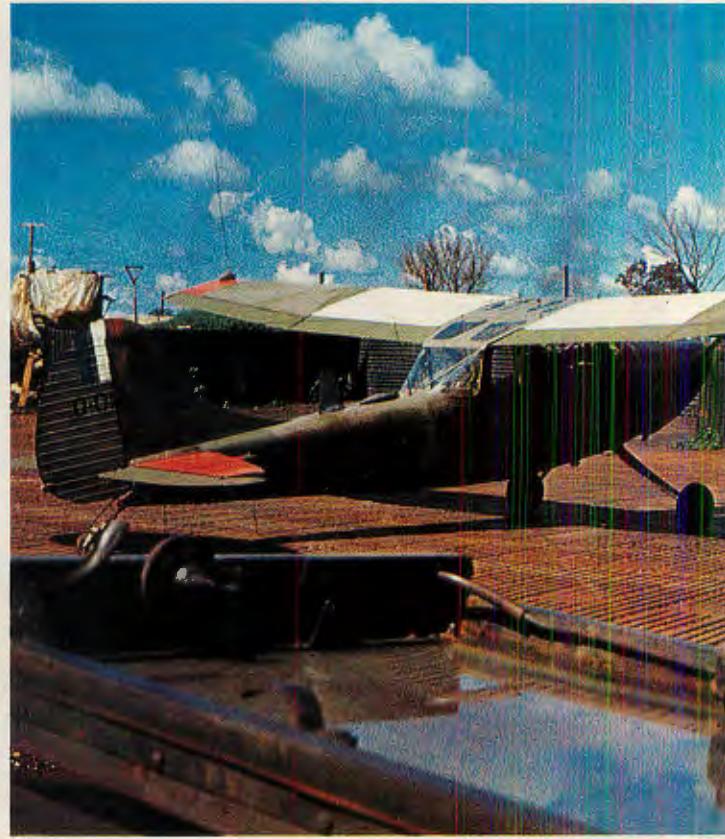
rived in Laos there was no Laotian army there to train. Not to worry, GI. Simons went out and kidnapped 12 battalions of Muong tribesmen, "put them in compounds behind barbed wire, fed them, clothed them — and gradually taught them to soldier. They were eager to learn; life had a purpose and they were even being paid." Simons' 12 battalions of Muong were so successful that the North Vietnamese backed off from cross-border operations.

Direct American Special Forces involvement in WHITE STAR metamorphosed into Project 404 and lasted until 1962, when the Geneva Accords closed off that theater of operations to Americans — at least to American military. The North Vietnamese, the South Vietnamese and the CIA continued to be active in Laos.

As one thoroughly disgusted former WHITE STAR/404 man put it: "This is how fucking weird we do things. If you were on one of the last teams in there in '62 [he was] and your name was on the list that the ICC [International Control Commission] checked off, they [the U.S. government] wouldn't let you back in Laos."

In 1963, the organization that handled unconventional and covert warfare for the South Vietnamese took on the name Luc Long Dac Biet (LLDB), sometimes called the Vietnamese

# TOP SECRET



Special Forces, and sometimes referred to disparagingly by Americans as "look long, duck back." The working relationships between the LLDB, its "Special Branch" which handled unconventional warfare, and the Green Berets of the U.S. were close in 1963, even though the Green Berets were ostensibly involved only in "bird watching" — sitting on the Laotian and Cambodian borders watching communist activity on the trails from "A" Camps. But even then some SF troops were leading Vietnamese units funded by the CSG/CIA.

In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson authorized implementation of Operations Plan (OPLAN) 34-A. That operation, the first with a direct tie-in to the Studies and Observation Group, began as a strategic-intelligence-gathering operation only. South Vietnam's LLDB "Special Branch" was supposed to supply the men; Military Assistance Command Vietnam the training sites and physical assets (boats, planes, guns); and the CIA funds and training.

In February 1964, MACV opened its Studies and Observation Group headquarters building in what had been the MACV 2 compound in Cholon, an adjunct of Saigon. In 1967 SOG moved to a building on Pasteur street in Saigon.

From the beginning, SOG's rather broad mission — clandestine operations in the denied areas of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia — gave the HQ staff the latitude to get involved in just about anything and, since SOG reported directly to the Commander MACV, first Gen. Harkins, then Gen. William C. Westmoreland, and finally Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, it had enough pull to co-opt existing operations and ones started up later by other military units.

However, in his book, *A Soldier Reports*, Westmoreland wrote: "Although SOG was a component of MACV, a special office in the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff supervised its activities, for, from the first, Washington exercised the closest control over SOG's operations. Every action had to be approved in advance by the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, and the White House."

Some SOG operators have claimed that the CIA staff had considerably more control over activities than was thought at the time or has been admitted since. In effect, they assert that if the military in Vietnam turned down some pet projects as too risky, the operation would be sold and approved in Washington.

In *The Raid*, Schemmer wrote of Simons, head of a SOG operation: "In

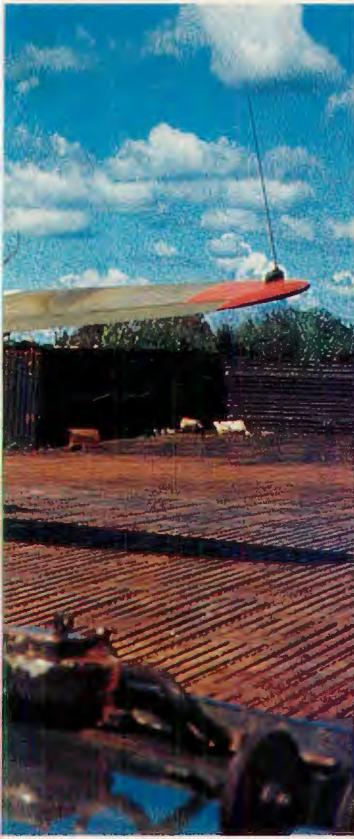
executing SOG missions, Simons refused, in his own words, to 'live with some of the restraints put on me.' But, he would add, 'I got away with it only because I didn't make any mistakes.' He knew that if he got caught, 'they'd get some other conductor for the trolley car and throw my dead body off the back.'

The MACVSOG established in February 1964 was initially supposed to train, advise and support logically the South Vietnamese LLDB "Special Branch" — changed to Special Exploitation Service (SES) in April 1964 — in the conduct of covert missions in Southeast Asia.

To achieve this, a Naval operation at Da Nang, an air-wing detachment at Nha Trang and a training element at a place called Bearcat, near the village of Long Thanh, 14 miles east of Saigon, were established.

One of the first SOG operations was named LEAPING LENA and was an attempt to monitor and interdict communist logistics on the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos. Five- and six-man teams of South Vietnamese SES troops parachuted in for these missions.

TIMBERWORK, another early operation, may well have been the SOG code name for the PT-boat raids on North Vietnamese coastal installa-



LEFT: SOG Teams early in the Vietnam War carried sterile weapons (ones that could not be pinpointed as issued to U.S. forces) in cross-border operations. This Indigenous trooper is carrying a .30-caliber Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) over his shoulder and an M3 45-caliber grease gun.

CENTER: Cessna O-1 "Bird Dog" was used as spotter plane and radio relay by SOG units operating in Cambodia, Laos and North Vietnam.

UPPER RIGHT: Modified CAR-15 was favorite weapon of SOG team members late in the war.

RIGHT: Silenced Hi-Standard .22 caliber pistol carried by SOG patrol members. This system was first used by OSS in World War II.



east Asia historians have since claimed that the North Vietnamese PT boats either were chasing South Vietnamese PT boats and hit the *Maddox* accidentally, or intentionally attacked the *Maddox*, assuming it was involved in the hanky-panky going down ashore.

There is strong reason to believe that one of SOG's most fascinating operations during the war was the launching of FASCINATION teams into North Vietnam.

The code name may be wrong (or right, depending on the time), but that particular facet of OPLAN 34-A is well documented in the books, mentioned previously, by Westmoreland and Schemmer. Each describes a slightly different method of operation and a slightly different goal — but since neither tied his description to a specific date, both could be right.

According to Schemmer, the plan was designed to shut down the North Vietnamese fishing industry by harassing the fishermen.

In Schemmer's version, the North Vietnamese fishermen were picked up along the coast by PT boats, then transferred to Phoenix Island near Da Nang. "There, they were treated royally, but their captors explained that next time it might be different. Because North Vietnamese political

leaders often used fishing boats to send contraband weapons and supplies to the south, it might be necessary to sink the boats, and some innocent fishermen might be killed. Perhaps, they were told, it would be best not to fish for a while, or not to fish too zealously — just enough to provide for each fisherman's immediate family. Then, by way of apology for the inconvenience, all the captured fishermen were given baskets of presents that contained sewing kits, cloth, fresh meat, vegetables, cigarettes, spices, garden seeds, sandals, small garden tools, pocket knives — and transistor radios tuned to a single, pre-selected frequency [tuned to a SOG-operated propaganda station]."

The fishermen were then taken back north and turned loose. Schemmer claims that subsequent intelligence from captured NVA reported a severe fish shortage in the north. The program came to an end when the SOG fishermen started picking up numerous "double dippers," who risked capture for another shot at the bennies.

Westmoreland says the kidnappings were conducted by motorized South Vietnamese junks which took North Vietnamese civilians, "usually fishermen," to the island. There, out of sight from the mainland, the SOG troops played the role of "communists, but anti-North Vietnamese communists." Then, gradually, during their six-to-eight-week stay on the island, the civilians were indoctrinated into anti-communist thinking. When returned, the civilians were given kits and fixed-frequency radio. SOG provided the programs.

One SOG operator contacted by SOF added one more detail. "They dropped that program when it got too repetitive. When the boats pulled up in the canals along North Vietnam's coast, everybody in the village would jump in a sampan to try and get himself captured and taken off to Phoenix for a shopping trip."

Although the original SOG plan did not encompass direct action by the American personnel assigned to it, that changed before a year was out, because of results obtained by direct American participation in two other classified operations.

In late May or early June 1964, it appears that Johnson approved American cross-border operations into Laos. The first such ops were launched by Project DELTA — an organization formed out of the 5th Special

tions that some sources claim triggered the Tonkin Gulf incident. On 2 August 1964, the U.S.S. *Maddox*, participating in Operation DESOTO (patrols along North Vietnam's coast by American destroyers), came under attack by North Vietnamese PT boats beyond the 12-mile limit. Some South-

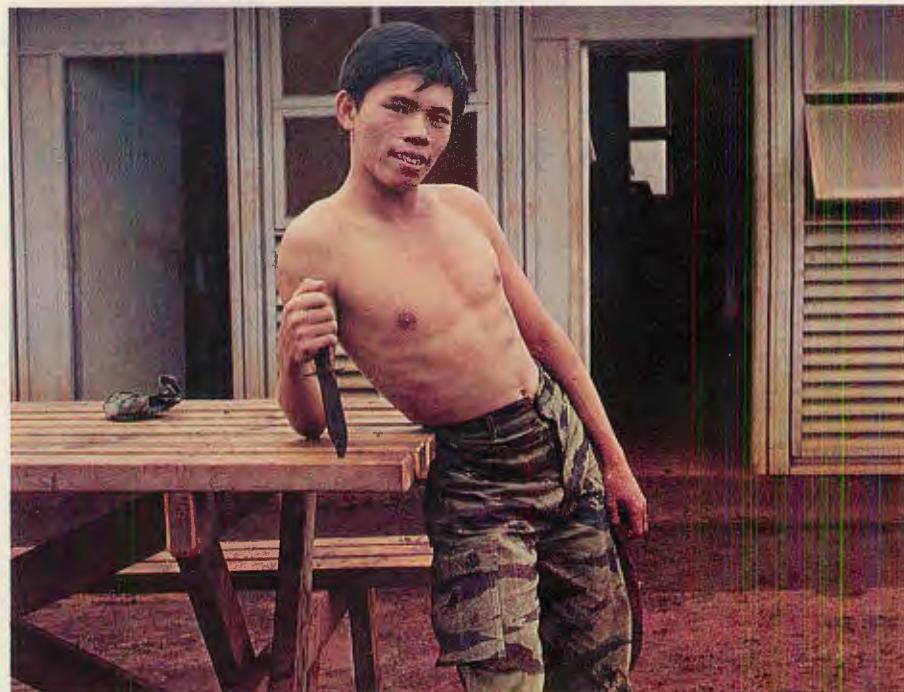
Forces Group.

Coming in a close second behind Project DELTA in launching the initial cross-border missions was Operation SHINING BRASS. In July 1964, A Company, 1st Special Forces Group, Okinawa, began sending teams of Green Berets into Vietnam on six-month TDY (Temporary Additional Duty) assignments to lead indigenous troops on cross-border operations into Laos.

Westmoreland was so impressed with the intelligence obtained by project DELTA that he had two other classified projects formed: SIGMA and OMEGA. Eventually, SIGMA operated from and in Vietnam's IV Corps and the lower half of III Corps. OMEGA operated in the upper half of III Corps and II Corps and DELTA operated in I Corps and the tri-border area, where Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos come together.

When Col. Donald V. Blackburn became the MACVSOG commander in May 1965, he moved quickly to assert SOG's control over all "over the fence" operations and, within a short time, Blackburn's men were ranging over the hills of not only Laos but North Vietnam.

Soon after Blackburn took command, SOG's activities became concentrated into five major operational areas: OPS 31 (maritime), OPS 32 (air



Nung SOG Recon Team member at Command and Control South (Ban Me Thout) In early 1970. SOG Recon Teams were composed of three Americans and six-to-nine Indigenous troops. Nungs, a Thai tribe of Chinese origin which lived in Vietnam were used frequently early in the war.

cover of the South Vietnamese Coastal Survey Service and, as one SOG type said, "tried to explain that it was surveying the coast of South Vietnam."

Operating from PT boats armed with 40mm automatic cannon and 50-

## Studies and Observation Group OPS-31 teams ranged from north of Hanoi to the DMZ.

operations), OPS 33 (psyops), OPLAN 34 (resistance and intelligence operations in North Vietnam) and OPS 35 (direct action, or strategic reconnaissance patrols across the fence).

SOG continued to grow under Col. John K. Singlaub, Col. Blackburn's replacement as Commander MACVSOG. In 1966 Singlaub got permission to go into Cambodia and in 1968 operations were conducted in North Vietnam. In addition escape-and-evasion nets for downed airmen were established during Singlaub's reign and SOG equipment and training improved considerably.

SOG's OPS 31 operated from Da Nang. Involved was a U.S. element, called the Naval Advisory Detachment, which was a little hard to explain since most of the element's members were Force Recon Marines or U.S. Navy SEALs. In OPS 31, the Vietnamese SES traveled under the

caliber machine guns, SOG's OPS 31 teams ranged from north of Hanoi to the DMZ — gathering intelligence, disrupting night-time fishing operations and putting raiding parties ashore to ambush trains and convoys and attack any coastal-defense units which got in the way — in an operation named WHITE ELEPHANT.

SOG's OPS 32, headquartered in Nha Trang, supplied transportation and intelligence through six separate air units assigned there. Some of them were a bit unusual.

SOG's First Flight Detachment consisted of four C-123 "blackbirds" (the unmarked planes and helicopters which supported SOG missions were called "blackbirds"). What made the unit different was that, in addition to carrying U.S. crews, the ships flew on some missions with regular Chinese Air Force pilots — traveling "black": no papers at all, as civilians.

Another unusual facet of SOG's air arm was the 15th Air Commandos Squadron. Nicknamed the "Stray Goose" detachment, the Commandos flew C-130s with the latest in electronic-warfare and electronic-counter-warfare systems.

SOG also had "blackbirds" equipped for the most sophisticated delivery and recovery techniques. Airborne troops were delivered by static-line parachute jumps or by HALO (High Altitude, Low Opening) jumps. Late in the war, SOG patrols sometimes carried full-recovery systems, consisting of a balloon to be attached by a 500-foot line to the SOG man on the ground. The "blackbird" would snatch the balloon and bring the guy on the end of the line along for the ride. The "blackbirds" were also rigged to handle sophisticated cargo-delivery systems.

Another SOG ship was the C-121 Constellation flown by the U.S. Navy. The bird was crammed with radio equipment and trailed an antenna over a mile long while flying missions off the coast of Hanoi. The C-121 could broadcast right on the main government frequencies in North Vietnam and blank them out.

From early in the war SOG had a running battle going with the U.S Air Force over strike aircraft. The Air Force wanted to convert the 7th and 13th Air Forces to jets. SOG preferred the WWII-vintage A-1Es which could carry more bombs and stay on target longer than any jet. The A-1Es were kept.

Finally, there were helicopters used by SOG. SOG's primary ship was the UH-1F, flown from 1967 on by the U.S. Air Force's 20th Helicopter Squadron, an outfit nicknamed the "Green Hornets." Some of those UH-1Fs were converted to gunships,



Indigenous SOG troops outfitted in sterile uniforms and weapons prior to a cross-border operation. The soldier on the left is armed with an M2 30-caliber carbine (left) and a modified French MAT-49. The North

Vietnamese captured a number of 9mm MAT-49 submachine guns from the French and modified them to take a Soviet 7.62x25 pistol cartridge.

equipped with side-firing 7.62mm "Miniguns" capable of firing up to 4,000 rounds per minute. Prior to the assignment of the 20th, the primary source of transport and gun helicopters was a Vietnamese Air Force Squadron of H-34s. The VNAF H-34s, described by former SOG members, as terrific, were also used after 1967 because of the experience of the pilots and because they were better suited to some missions.

SOG's OPS 33 consisted of both gray and black psychological operations — or psyops. The perpetrators of gray operations never identified themselves or told which side they were on. One of SOG's best gray psyops was the "Voice of Freedom," which used a 1,000,000-watt transmitter to broadcast programs into Hanoi in both Vietnamese and Chinese. Another SOG radio operation was a black op, that is, one that was passed off as being something it was not. Vietnamese agents, operating inside North Vietnam, broadcast over a number of stations that claimed to be part of the National Liberation Front.

One SOG black psyop involved the introduction of false documents into

## MACVSOG EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Following is an article prepared by Shelby L. Stanton on weapons and equipment carried by the men of MACVSOG, along with a drawing of a man in a STABO rig with auxiliary equipment. When reading any articles on MACVSOG, please keep in mind that at different times the equipment, tactics, formations, etc. changed.

**FATIGUES:** Usually plain 100% cotton-poplin jungle fatigues — the non-ristop kind with shoulder straps and waist buttons (an early type of jungle fatigues) — sprayed with black spray-paint splotching, with sleeves worn down. Blood type (ex: A POS) embroidered over right pocket and "NO PEN" over left — if no penicillin could be administered. Sometimes the ordinary tropical ripstop was worn, and, rarely, issue camouflage (very late in the war on the latter). On some special operations, enemy uniforms were worn.

**HATS:** Most often, cut-down boonie caps or just bandanas.

**SCARVES:** Triangular medical OD bandages, also worn as sweatbands around the forehead.

**OTHER CLOTHING:** Canvas-duck AF survival vest (*not* the common mesh type) with sleeves and collar from a jungle-fatigue shirt sewn on, was often worn instead of a shirt, or over the "jungle sweater" (the nylon/triacetate, tricot knit sleeping shirt) if operating in the mountains. This because of the vest's improved carrying capacity.

**FOOTGEAR:** Canvas leggings laced midway up the calves; shoelaces on the side. These leggings go down over the jungle boots. They were optional but typical.

**GEAR:** STABO rig with ordinary pistol belt. The STABO rig was made in Taiwan by the CIA and other civilian agencies and named for the two sergeants (letters from their last names combined to form "Stabo") who designed it. (See sketch.) These had snap links attached for lift-out via chopper, allowed both arms to remain free for firing or carrying things and allowed the pistol belt to be worn undone. First-aid and miscellaneous gear (signal mirror, cut-down signal panel, mini-smokes, mini-grenades, etc.) were

carried forward. A small gas mask was worn over the right chest, and a BAR belt was common. A knife of the individual's preference was carried upside down on the chest strap of the STABO rig.

A can of albumin blood-expander was also carried on the chest strap or just over the rucksack behind the neck (where the sun would often ruin it). A small, rubber intravenous (IV) tube was carried in the vest or shirt pocket. Survival-pack containers and canteen covers were used as ammunition pouches. Usually three one-quart canteens were carried behind. New M16 pouches were commonly used. The order of preference on the pistol belt was grenades, cut-down emergency panel in ammo pouch and mini-smokes up front; followed by ammo pouches (as described) and, in the rear, the canteens and two survival packets (A and B type). [Ed. Note: Operational and Reserve Survival Packets.]

**WATCH:** Army-issue Seiko with black face, black plastic band and wrist compass.

**RADIO:** URC-68  
**WEAPONS CARRIED BY EACH MAN:**

1. Shoulder or hip holster, 9mm Browning automatic pistol.
2. High-Standard .22 with silencer in canvas pocket added to back of rucksack.
3. CAR-15 was most common. Rarely were enemy weapons used, except in North Vietnam, because the distinct sound of "friendly fire" was used for orientation in fire fights.
4. Sawed-off M-79 grenade launcher with snap-link through the trigger guard and through the web gear on the right side or, as an alternative, on strap over chest (with anti-personnel round in chamber).
5. Pen flares with special cartridges fitted into socket.

Also, other weapons carried instead of the CAR-15 were the Swedish K; Sten gun with silencer; M-1 carbine; M16 with suppressor; XM-203 — all according to individual preference.

**RUCKSACK:** Indigenous rucks only — full, but with no extraneous material hanging out.

*Reprinted by permission from the Maroon Beret.*



Viet Cong organizations in South Vietnam, and another the introduction of sabotaged ammo into communist ammunition stockpiles whenever possible.

The rigged rounds used in these ops were manufactured in the United States, then delivered to SOG in Saigon for delivery in or out of the country. Grenades with instantaneous fuses, 7.62mm rounds rigged to blow up when fired and mortar rounds which detonated in the tube were specialties of Operation ELDEST SON.

"It [ELDEST SON] was a good thing, because nothing is more beautiful than to see an aerial photo of a mortar site in which everything [trees, people, etc.] is blown out from the mortar," said a former SOG member.

ELDEST SON also provided grist for the SOG troops responsible for starting rumors among the VC. The line went: "You have to understand, comrades, that the Chinese [who supplied most of the ammo to North Vietnam] are having great difficulty maintaining quality control during their cultural revolution."

Once they heard that story, every time an NVA fired his rifle, or dropped a round down a mortar tube, it must have been done with trepidation.

According to some of the SOG troops who participated in the salting of bad rounds during ELDEST SON, the real trick was not finding the ammo cache, nor getting in, but getting the ammo boxes open, the doctored rounds in and the boxes resealed without leaving a trace.

OPLAN 34 encompassed all agent-insertion activities into North Vietnam. In the early days of SOG, agents parachuted in but, as most of these efforts were unsuccessful, SOG started moving its agents — both in-

The members of Studies and Observation Group Recon Team Hammer, Command and Control South, 1970.

dividuals and teams — overland. The agents would infiltrate into Laos and then cross over.

Many, if not all, indigenous agents sent by SOG into North Vietnam were doubled by the NVA and, when that happened, SOG would play the agents as triples — feeding harmless but accurate information and disinformation north to cause problems.

## SOG's most famous activities: strategic recon into Laos.

However, in 1968 Americans were involved in ground actions deep in North Vietnam on what were called KIT-CAT missions. Messages from those teams were channeled through a National Security Agency station named Tri Bach, near Hue-Phu Bai. Depending on the type of message received from the KIT-CAT teams it either went straight to Fort Belvoir, Md., by "flash" communications systems or through normal military channels.

SOG's most famous activities, and those best reported on so far (see pp. 47, 51), fell under OPS 35: strategic reconnaissance patrols into Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam. OPS 35 was the largest of all the OPS, had the most men and equipment committed to it and was totally controlled by the Americans involved.

The first recon teams on the ground in Laos came from the 5th Special Forces Group's Project DELTA or the 1st Special Forces Group's SHINING BRASS project in 1964. The teams moved into the panhandle area of Laos looking for targets (camps, caches and choke points on the system of trails and roads that made up the Ho Chi Minh trail), to capture

prisoners, place mines and sensors and plant the sabotaged rounds developed in the ELDEST SON program.

When Blackburn took over as Commander MACVSOG in June 1965, he snatched Project DELTA's over-the-fence operations for SOG, but it appears that, for some time, the personnel used to run the missions still came out of 1st Special Forces Group in Okinawa.

Under Blackburn and his OPS 35 commanding officer, Col. "Bull" Simons, the name of the operation in Laos became PRAIRIE FIRE. Later on, when Cambodia was added to the target list, it was called DANIEL BOONE. North Vietnam was added even later.

The basic element of the OPS 35 effort was the SOG Spike Teams. (During the later years in Vietnam the name changed to Recon teams.) Spike teams were a mixed force, usually three Americans and six-to-nine indigenous troops, called indigs. The first indig troops were usually Nungs — a Thai tribe of Chinese origin which lived in South Vietnam — and later the majority were Montagnards, though some were Vietnamese and Laotian.

When Col. Simons took over, the American personnel were still coming out of 1st Special Forces Group in Okinawa. But, soon afterward, Special Forces troops from Okinawa were given PCS (Permanent Change of Station) orders and sent to Vietnam. In addition, word went back to Fort Bragg, N.C., to other Special Forces troops in the 7th Special Forces Group that there was a demand for volunteers to run classified projects in Vietnam.

The Special Forces troops who ran the Spike Team patrols trained at Bearcat, near the village of Long Thanh. The One-Zero, or team-leader school, was there, as was the parachute-training facility.

The Americans went operational when they were assigned to one of SOG's four FOBs (Forward Operating Bases). FOB-1 was located at Phu Bai, FOB-2 at Kon Tum, FOB-3 at Khe Sanh and FOB-4 at Marble Mountain, Da Nang.

When Col. John K. Singlaub took over as Commander MACVSOG in 1966, SOG's FOBs underwent a name change to CCS, CCC and CCN: Com-

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# SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

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**COVER:** The Military Assistance Command Vietnam Studies and Observation Group never authorized an official emblem. The one on this month's cover was duplicated from one of the earliest plaques prepared "unofficially" in Vietnam. The emblem also wound up on coffee mugs, blankets and shoulder patches, two examples of which appear in the magazine.



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